Chapter 2

Putting Problem-Oriented Policing and Problem-Solving in the Context of the Whole Police Mission

How Does Problem-Solving Fit in With Other Aspects of Police Work?

"We need problems to become the basic units of work in policing and other city services, and to make that idea real."

– Dennis Nowicki

Goldstein's assertion that problem-oriented policing affects virtually everything the police do, and how police agencies are run, can be confusing. Is he saying that the police should discontinue all their conventional methods of operation and engage exclusively in problem-solving processes? Where does this leave the conventional tasks and methods for responding to calls for service or investigating crimes? Police administrators who endorse problem-oriented policing have sought to reconcile the demands on their agencies to continue performing these conventional police tasks with the new demands to engage in substantive problem-solving. Lingering conceptual confusion about how problem-solving is supposed to fit into the context of the entire police mission may account for why the police have not fully integrated the old, unavoidable tasks and methods with the new tasks and methods.

One may clear up the conceptual confusion by returning to some first principles of policing. Goldstein's writings on problem-oriented policing are best understood in the context of his earlier writings about the police's role in society (1977). In those writings, Goldstein argued that to understand policing properly, one has to distinguish between the objectives the police are trying to achieve and the methods they use to achieve them. Accordingly, he has argued that investigating crimes and enforcing laws, long thought of as basic policing objectives, are not objectives in and of themselves, but rather methods for achieving other, more broadly stated, objectives. Problem-oriented policing, then, is concerned with expanding on and improving the methods the police use to achieve their more fundamental objectives.

What Are the Fundamental Objectives of Policing?

The fundamental objectives of policing (also referred to as the mission of the police or the core functions of policing) are the ultimate purposes for which police agencies have been created. Goldstein was one of a number of scholars who recognized and articulated the breadth and complexity of the police mission. He synthesized his understanding of the multiple objectives of the police in his seminal work, *Policing a Free Society*, a precursor to his writings on

problem-oriented policing. Drawing from even earlier work he had done, Goldstein (1977) characterized the fundamental objectives of the police in free societies as follows:

1. to prevent and control conduct threatening to life and property (including serious crime);
2. to aid crime victims and protect people in danger of physical harm;
3. to protect constitutional guarantees, such as the right to free speech and assembly;
4. to facilitate the movement of people and vehicles;
5. to assist those who cannot care for themselves, including the intoxicated, the addicted, the mentally ill, the physically disabled, the elderly, and the young;
6. to resolve conflict between individuals, between groups, or between citizens and their government;
7. to identify problems that have the potential for becoming more serious for individuals, the police or the government; and
8. to create and maintain a feeling of security in the community.

"Reactive policing is so much easier. Police officers are trained to prefer order to disorder, and problem-solving seems, to some officers, to be creating disorder, to be upsetting the balance of things."

– Dan Reynolds

While there are other ways to characterize the police mission, both in greater and lesser detail, Goldstein's formulation remains a comprehensive and useful reference for guiding police actions. Some police agencies have other specialized functions, but most have these basic ones in common. The ultimate aim of problem-oriented policing is to continually make the police better at accomplishing each of the above objectives to better prevent crime, to better assist victims, to make communities feel safer, and so forth. Everything the police do, whether using conventional or innovative methods, should be in pursuit of one or more of these fundamental objectives.

Properly understood, this broad, though not limitless, set of objectives should be liberating for the police. Theoretically, at least, it frees the police from being bound to certain methods of achieving these objectives, allowing them to develop other methods that might prove more effective. In practice, however, the police remain somewhat bound to conventional methods of operating, for several reasons. One is the sheer force of habit habits not only of the police, but also of the public and of other government institutions. Enormous investments have been made in the form of technology, training and organizational relationships to support conventional methods like criminal investigation, criminal prosecution and rapid response to calls for police service. A second, and yet more profound, reason why the police remain bound to conventional methods is that not all decision-makers accept the notion that law enforcement is but a means to other ends. The idea, that the fundamental purpose of the police is to enforce the law, however idealistic, remains powerfully attractive

because it is simple and straightforward, and it seems, on its surface, to be consistent with more deeply held beliefs about the rule of law.

The entire edifice of problem-oriented policing is built on the foregoing ideas about the fundamental objectives of the police, the recognition of law enforcement power as a means rather than an end, and all the implications these notions have for the exercise of police discretion and for police authority to operate by administrative rules, and not solely by legislative decree. In other words, problem-oriented policing makes sense to those who share these fundamental beliefs about the police's role and who see policing as a complex and sensitive function, but less so to those who don't. Many of these core beliefs get glossed over in the debates and discussions about problem-oriented policing. The debates and discussions then are about how best to implement problem-oriented policing, rather than whether it is the right approach to policing at all. Problem-oriented policing implicates some of the most important principles governing police power in a society of law.

[92] I struggled to find the right term to apply to this concept. After trying "mode", "method", "mental construct", and "core process", I settled on "operational strategy" thanks to a suggestion by Lt. Ken Bunker of the Reno Police Department.

What Are the Various Operational Strategies of Police Work?

Assuming, as I do, that Goldstein is correct in his articulation of the fundamental objectives of the police (that there are multiple objectives that overlap and, at times, conflict with, one another, and that law enforcement is but a means to these ends), it is then possible to understand policing in terms of the various methods or strategies used to achieve these objectives. The police employ innumerable specific tactics, but one can better understand these in terms of a few core operational strategies.[92] There are five core operational strategies–preventive patrol, routine incident response, emergency response, criminal investigation, and problem-solving–and one ancillary operational strategy–support services. This, of course, is not the only way to conceptualize police work. The first four operational strategies constitute the ways police have conventionally done their work, at least since the 1930s. Problem-solving is a new operational strategy, introduced in Goldstein's problem-oriented policing concept. (See Chapter 1 for a discussion of the distinction between problem-solving and problem-oriented policing.)

Each operational strategy of police work has unique and distinct features. Each represents a particular process or method for approaching situations the police encounter. Each is taught to police officers (problem-solving, only recently), and officers are taught when each is appropriate. Each has a distinct general procedural framework that guides officers in doing their work within that operational strategy. Each has a distinct general goal or objective. Each entails a unique way of defining a unit of work, and distinct general

performance standards and indicators. Each has its own accountability, reporting and record-keeping systems.

Preventive Patrol

Preventive patrol remains the predominant operational strategy of policing in terms of time spent, all research questioning its effectiveness notwithstanding. It is the operational strategy in which uniformed police officers are expected to operate when they are not otherwise compelled to operate differently. The fundamental logic of preventive patrol is twofold. First, the presence of uniformed police officers is intended to deter citizens from committing offenses, and to enhance their sense of security. Second, the presence of officers is intended to increase the probability that they will interrupt offenses in progress. The objectives of preventive patrol are to prevent and detect offenses, and promote a general feeling of security. Few police departments use formal performance indicators to measure preventive patrol, although many departments still try to quantify the amount of time officers dedicate to preventive patrol by foot, and some capture vehicle mileage.[93] Recruit officers are taught methods of preventive patrol, though few experienced officers seriously adhere to these methods. Unlike the other operational strategies of police work, preventive patrol does not lend itself to discrete work units; rather, it is an ongoing activity. Nor are there strong systems of accountability for preventive patrol beyond the occasional chewing out of an officer who fails to detect a commercial burglary on his or her beat. While preventive patrol has been deemphasized by many modern police managers, it remains a strong public expectation of police. Police patrol operations remain principally structured around preventive patrol, emergency response and the handling of routine incidents.

[93] *O.W. Wilson, one of the principal proponents of the value of motorized preventive patrol, reportedly thought of installing electronic sensors on streets in Chicago to monitor the frequency and patterns of motorized police patrols. Such a system would allow for quantifiable performance indicators related to preventive patrol. For further reading on the history and effectiveness of preventive patrol, see Kelling et al. (1974) and Police Foundation (1981).*

Routine Incident Response

Most reactive police business is handled using the routine incident response operational strategy, encompassing the vast majority of what patrol officers and their civilian support staff do (other than preventive patrol). Routine incident response entails the methodical collection of information about a situation, and classification of the situation (crime, information exchange, civil matter, etc.). Most police agencies have over 100 classification categories. The specific police objective will, of course, vary depending on the nature of the situation, but generally, the objective is to restore order, document information or otherwise provide some immediate service to the parties involved. Specific performance indicators are such things as satisfied citizens, no repeat calls for service during that tour of duty, etc. Most routine incidents are packaged as a "call for service," complete with a permanent record of the incident and the police

response. Much of the patrol operation is judged by how officers handle these routine incidents.

Emergency Response

Police use the emergency response operational strategy far less frequently than the routine incident response operational strategy, yet it is probably the most critical to the police agency's success, because human life is most directly at stake. It encompasses crimes in progress, officers' requests for immediate assistance, traffic accidents with injuries, natural disasters, and so forth. The general objective is to save lives, minimize injury and restore a basic level of order. Until the police achieve these objectives, they can employ no other operational strategy of police work. The unit of work is commonly thought of as a "critical incident" or an "emergency response." Special reports about major critical incidents and how they were handled are sometimes prepared and reviewed with an eye toward improving future responses to similar incidents. The police are specially trained in emergency response techniques, from vehicle operation to first aid to hostage rescue.

Criminal Investigation

The criminal investigation operational strategy, while constituting a smaller proportion of police work than most people imagine, dominates the public's perception of police work and the police's perception of themselves; that is, thoughts about investigative work and images of detectives contribute to an idealized understanding of policing. There is a basic framework common to all criminal investigations, from those of the most minor crimes, such as shoplifting, to those of the most complex, such as homicide. Once the police determine that a crime has been committed, the elements of criminal law provide the general framework for investigations, and various techniques have been developed to enable the police to establish the statutory elements of crimes.[94] The unit of work in criminal investigations is the "case." There are special procedures for managing the processing and flow of cases. The standards of proof applied to criminal investigations are legal standards. Police must have "reasonable suspicion" to detain suspects, "probable cause" to arrest them, and enough evidence for prosecutors to establish "proof beyond a reasonable doubt" to secure a conviction. The general objective in this operational strategy is to prepare a prosecutable case. Case clearance and case filing rates provide the specific performance indicators and serve as the foundation for accountability in criminal investigations. There is an abundance of specialized training unique to the investigation of crimes.

[94] *Preliminary crime investigations can lead the police to pursue responses in addition to or other than criminal investigation, but all too often, police investigators limit themselves to a criminal investigation, without broadening the inquiry into the larger or underlying problems.*

"The sense of emergency in policing has crowded out our capacity to think about problems in the long term."

– Dan Reynolds

Problem-Solving

The fifth operational strategy of police work is what is now referred to as problem-solving. Historically, it is the least well-developed by the police profession. While the police have always used the mental processes of problem-solving, problem-solving as a formal operational strategy of police work has gained some structure and systematic attention only in the past 20 years. Like the other operational strategies, problem-solving has a distinct framework for guiding action. Problem-solving methodology in policing is known familiarly by such acronyms as SARA or CAPRA. It entails problem identification, analysis, response, and evaluation. The general objective of problem-solving is to reduce harm caused by patterns of chronic offensive behavior. The unit of work in problem-solving is known as a "problem," a "problem-solving project" or a "POP project." Performance indicators are significant reductions in harm that are plausibly caused by some specific intended intervention, reductions that hold for some reasonable period of time. Sufficient standards of proof have not been developed, but the current standards are adapted from the social sciences. Problem-solving also involves some specialized training, and systems for reporting and accounting for problem-solving are being developed.

Support Services

A sixth operational strategy rounds out the picture of the business of policing. This operational strategy, which one might call support services, incorporates the many ancillary services the police provide to the public. The police provide these services routinely, rather than in response to any specific situation. Such services include providing copies of police reports, taking fingerprints for noninvestigative purposes, distributing or teaching generic crime prevention information, operating youth activity programs, and so forth. This operational strategy relates only indirectly to the police's fundamental objectives, although its scope has clearly grown in the era of community policing. It serves primarily to promote and enhance police legitimacy in the eyes of the public by providing nonconfrontational, nonadversarial and noncontroversial services to the public.

Table 7 summarizes the operational strategies of police work and their distinct features.

Table 7
Operational Strategies of Police Work

Operational strategy	Work Unit	Objectives	Record System	Reporting Requirements	Performance Standards	Specialized Training	Processes	Accountability
Preventive Patrol	None – ongoing	Prevent and detect offenses, promote general feelings of security	Daily activity reports, patrol vehicle mileage	Daily activity reports	Absence of crime, low levels of citizen fear, high rates of police detection of certain types of offenses (e.g., commercial burglary)	Patrol methods (random, directed, conspicuous, inconspicuous)	Limited – some officers use systematic area coverage patterns and plans	Limited – some expectations officers will detect certain offenses on their beats, some command accountability for absence of citizen complaints about police presence
Routine Incident Response	Call	Record incident, resolve dispute, provide or take information	Dispatch records	Report or coded disposition	Complainant satisfaction, no repeat calls that shift, fair treatment of parties, proper completion of report	Special training by type of incident	Procedures according to call type, reporting requirements	Code out call, file report; accountability rests with officer assigned and shift supervisor
Emergency Response	Critical incident	Save life, interrupt crime, protect property, minimize injury	Dispatch records, after- action reports	Critical incident report	No deaths, minimal injuries, order restored	Vehicle operation, first aid, hostage rescue, SWAT, defensive tactics	First aid procedures, critical incident procedures, triage	Primary officer or scene commander, until incident ends (handed off, if necessary)
Criminal Investigation	Case	Establish culpability, make prosecutable case, apprehend offender, clear case	Case files	Case report and file	Case filed by prosecutor, suspect apprehended	Death investigation, crime scene analysis, forensics, interviewing	Criminal investigative procedures	Case file deadlines, case management (handed off, if necessary), rests with detective assigned, unit supervisor
Problem-Solving	Problem or project	Reduce harm, reduce incidence, eliminate problem, improve response	Project files	Sometimes none, project report	Significant reduction in harm, caused by intervention, for reasonable period of time	Problem-solving methods	SARA, CAPRA	Rests with police chief, district commander, supervisor, and officer
Support Services	Program or procedure	Provide service, enhance police legitimacy	Program reports	Program or budget reports	Use/popularity of service	Specific procedures	Written procedure or curriculum	Fiscal

At What Levels Is Police Work Done?

In addition to understanding police work in terms of the eight fundamental objectives and six operational strategies, one can also understand it in terms of the various levels at which police operate. That is, policing in any given jurisdiction occurs on several scales, ranging from a microlevel (or highly localized) to intermediate levels to a macrolevel (or communitywide). The microlevel refers to how individual, isolated, specific situations are handled. The intermediate level refers to the combination of separate situations into a larger unit of work. The macrolevel refers to the police agency's policies and practices related to an entire class of situations. For simplicity, I use three levels of aggregation to describe the scope or scale of police work. The scale of the police work is roughly proportionate to, and is determined by, the number of people affected by a particular situation–often, the number of victims or complainants.[95]

[95] *Alpert and Moore (1998) point out that the size (or scope) of problems can be described in various terms: "(1) [the] total resources committed to the problem, (2) [the] amount of time taken to solve, (3) the number of specialized resources required, (4) the extent to which higher-ranking officers must mobilize and coordinate efforts within and outside the department to deal with the problem, and (5) its importance and scale within the community."*

There are varying *operating levels* in each operational strategy of police work. For example, criminal investigation occurs at the microlevel during the investigation of a single crime with a single victim (e.g., a theft or assault). It also occurs at the macrolevel, where the policies and practices for investigating an entire class of crimes, and potentially affecting the entire community, are determined. Criminal investigation also occurs at the intermediate level, where a series of individual crimes are combined for investigative purposes. A rash of burglaries or robberies in a neighborhood might be investigated jointly. Similarly, emergency response occurs at the microlevel (e.g., a single traffic accident, with injuries), the intermediate level (e.g., a natural disaster or large civil disorder), and the macrolevel (e.g., emergency preparedness planning). The same pattern holds for the problem-solving operational strategy, which ranges from highly localized beat-level (microlevel) problem-solving (e.g., one drug house, or even one person) to the intermediate level (e.g., a prostitution strip), to the macrolevel (e.g., juvenile homicides throughout a city). In each operational strategy, the scope of the situation should dictate the level of resources dedicated to addressing it.

Almost all police work can be understood within this general conceptual framework of objectives, operational strategies and operating levels. The framework helps explain *what the police are trying to achieve, how they are trying to achieve it, and on what scale they are operating.* For example, the police might identify a problem related to crowds' congregating on the streets and sidewalks following political rallies. They might then decide that their primary objective is to safeguard the constitutional right to public assembly, with secondary objectives of preventing injury and facilitating the movement of traffic. They might then conclude that, in addition to handling the incident at hand, they

need to study this type of problem further to develop a new response, because the current response is inadequate, and similar incidents arise in various contexts. Accordingly, they might then decide that the inquiry needed is sufficiently expansive to warrant making it a high priority for the research and planning unit, and to warrant assigning several police officers and supervisors who regularly handle such incidents to join the planning effort. The inquiry results would then determine the level of resources needed to address future incidents. Table 8 provides additional examples of police work at each level, in each operational strategy.

Table 8
Operating Levels and Operational Strategies of Police Work

Operating Level	**Operational Strategy of Police Work**				
	Preventive Patrol	*Routine Incident Response*	*Emergency Response*	*Criminal Investigation*	*Problem-Solving*
Macro	Patrol deployment plans	Policies related to categories of incidents	Policies related to categories of emergencies	Policies and practices related to categories of crimes	Policies and practices related to categories of problems
Intermediate	Directed patrols by groups of officers	Traffic control at large public event	Bar fight, multiple-vehicle accident	Rash of burglaries in a neighborhood	Prostitution on a commercial strip
Micro	Routine preventive patrol by beat officers	Dispute, minor crime reporting, provision of directions, minor traffic accident investigation	Traffic accident, with injuries; police officer in need of immediate assistance	Shoplifting; assault, with known suspect	Problem individual

Note: The flow of the arrows reflects the need for data from the first four operational strategies to be analyzed in the problem-solving operational strategy, which in turn informs and improves the other operational strategies.

The ultimate goal of police reform is to enable the police to better achieve the full range of their objectives, effectively, efficiently and in a manner consistent with basic principles of justice. To do so, the police must be able to perform well in each operational strategy of police work, and at each operating level. This requires that the police develop an organizational capacity to employ the appropriate operational strategy of police work with the appropriate level of resources.[96] It means having a refined understanding of what particular objectives the police are trying to achieve. It means being able to make smooth transitions between and among the various operational strategies of police work, and up and down the operating levels.

A good police officer is one who is always clear about his or her objectives, and knows how to transition from an emergency response to a routine incident response, or from a criminal investigation to problem-solving. A good police manager is one who knows how to ensure that each situation is being handled with the right level of resources, and in the appropriate operational strategy. Making the links between and among the cells of this matrix is challenging and demands sophisticated police work and management–knowing, for example, when a pattern of routine incidents indicates a larger underlying problem that might lead to worse disruption of community life if not addressed, and then using the right level of resources and the right processes to address the situation. A good police department is one in which all operational and administrative systems are aligned and prepared to respond to the community's needs. Where policing often goes wrong is in failures to recognize and balance competing objectives, failures to recognize that a different operational strategy is required for a situation, and failures to use the right level of resources for a particular situation.[97] Precisely because the dynamics of social conflict change so quickly, police organizations are seriously challenged to become highly sensitized to these changes and to respond appropriately. In its broadest sense, problem-oriented policing is a framework designed to help police meet this challenge.

The above conceptualization of police work in terms of the interdependent relationships between and among objectives, operational strategies and operating levels is my own. Herman Goldstein conceptualizes these matters a bit differently than I do. In his view, problem-oriented policing is a mindset that transcends the operational strategies of preventive patrol, routine incident response, emergency response and criminal investigation. It is an analytical way of thinking about and addressing all of the business of policing. In his view, if all of the business of policing, including the handling of incidents, emergencies and criminal investigations, were subjected to a problem-oriented approach, it would ultimately inform the way the police perform those functions. For Goldstein, problem-solving is

[96] *Sparrow observed that some forms of community or neighborhood policing that deploy the majority of police resources at the neighborhood or beat level inadvertently limit the police agency's capacity to respond to larger crime and disorder problems. He wrote, "[P]olice departments need to build their capacity to perform problem identification and analysis at many different levels of aggregation, and in many different defining dimensions" (1994:48).*

[97] *I found an outstanding example of a police agency that tries to determine the appropriate operational strategy of response and operating level at the earliest possible time. The Merseyside, England, Police have created what they call incident management units (IMUs). The IMUs, staffed by police constables and analysts, receive notification of most nonemergency citizen complaints to the agency. Once they log a complaint, they begin a preliminary analysis of it to determine if it constitutes part of a larger problem. They then either try to address the problem, or forward the information to the appropriate operational personnel for follow-up (Merseyside Police n.d.).*

more like the research behind police operations. I see problem-solving more as part of police operations. Goldstein worries that my characterization of problem-solving as a distinct operational strategy of police work reduces it to a lower level of importance than is warranted, and detracts from the holistic nature of his approach. My intent is quite the opposite: In conceptualizing problem-solving as a distinct operational strategy of police work, I intend to elevate it to a level of importance and attention commensurate with that of preventive patrol, emergency response, routine incident response and criminal investigation. For most of the history of policing, problem-solving has not been recognized as a distinct operational strategy of police work. I contend that, even since the advent of problem-oriented policing, most police agencies still have not elevated problem-solving to the level of the other operational strategies, failing to develop the formal systems needed to sustain it. Goldstein and I agree that the process of problem-solving is at least as important as the conventional processes the police use.

"Compared with other regulatory professions, the police have led the way in the early articulation and implementation of the problem-oriented approach. The police, however, have since run into a specific obstacle, which is their general failure to construct the managerial systems that are required to run problem-solving at higher levels, and as the core of police operations."

– Malcolm Sparrow

How Should the Police Integrate the Need To Address Community Problems With the Desire To Improve Administrative and Procedural Processes?

A problem-solving methodology can be applied to almost any endeavor requiring some critical thought before action. In the context of policing, problem-solving methods can be applied to community problems as well as to internal administrative and procedural problems. The mere application of a problem-solving process does not automatically render the undertaking a form of problem-oriented policing in Goldstein's terms. For example, a police department supply clerk could use a problem-solving process to work out difficulties ordering uniforms, but this would not make uniform acquisition part of problem-oriented policing. The "problems" to which Goldstein refers in problem-oriented policing are matters directly relating to the public's safety and security, not to the police agency's inner workings. Table 9 on the next page lists examples of what Goldstein refers to as "substantive community problems," and examples of administrative and procedural processes.

Similarly, the police can apply problem-solving to the process of investigating crimes or responding to emergencies, but if this results only in making these processes more efficient, without creating some overall improvements to the public's safety and security, it does not constitute problem-oriented policing. In Goldstein's terms, problem-oriented policing entails making tangible improvements to the public's safety and security, and increasing police effectiveness, not merely making police processes less burdensome to the police and/or the public.

Table 9
Examples of Substantive Community Problems vs. Administrative and Procedural Problems

Substantive Community Problems[98]	Administrative and Procedural Problems
• Auto insurance frauds • Auto thefts for export • Auto thefts in mall parking lots • Auto thefts in parking garages • Auto thefts/larcenies in commuter lots • Bullying in high schools • Burglaries at schools and recreation buildings • Burglaries at storage facilities • Burglaries at warehouses • Burglaries in the suburbs • Burglaries/thefts in areas near high schools • Carjackings • Crack houses and shooting galleries • Cruising (automobile) by youths • Day laborers (problems due to congregation of) • Disturbances/riots during local festivals • Drug dealing and pay phones • Drug dealing in parks • Drug dealing/prostitution in motels • Drug dealing to schoolchildren • Drug markets on the street • Drunkenness and fights in entertainment districts • False intrusion alarms • Fights and disturbances at bars/clubs • Fights/weapons in high schools • Gasoline drive-offs • Graffiti in commercial districts • Homeless people loitering in libraries and public buildings • Illicit sexual activity in public places • Motorists running red lights • Muggings/assaults around bus terminals • Panhandling in commercial districts • Pawn shops (trafficking in stolen property) • Private apartment complexes (problems in) • Prostitution strips • Public housing complexes (problems in) • Robberies at convenience stores • Robberies/purse-snatchings of tourists • Shoplifting by juveniles • Shoplifting by professionals • Squeegee men (intimidation, extortion by) • Telephone frauds and shoulder surfing at public transport terminals • Thefts from construction sites	• Assigning cases for investigation • Automating report writing • Constructing new police facilities • Controlling police misconduct • Eliminating discriminatory personnel practices • Establishing satellite police offices • Evaluating personnel performance • Gaining accreditation • Implementing bicycle patrol • Improving media relations • Maintaining official records • Negotiating labor contracts • Preparing a budget • Preparing patrol deployment plans • Promoting and rewarding personnel • Purchasing equipment and supplies • Recruiting and managing citizen volunteers • Recruiting police officers • Reorganizing the police department • Setting shift rotation schedules • Storing evidence • Streamlining booking procedures • Upgrading communications technology

The distinctions made earlier between problem-solving and problem-oriented policing do not mean that the problem-solving applied to administrative issues or to promote procedural efficiency is not important. Indeed, the police have a continual obligation to use their resources as efficiently as possible, and problem-solving processes can help them do so. Using thoughtful, analytic methods to address administrative matters can sharpen those skills needed to address community problems. However, no amount of efficiency-driven problem-solving can substitute for the more important and more challenging application of problem-solving to community crime, disorder and fear.

The application of problem-solving methods to administrative or procedural matters represents one of the most significant sources of confusion about problem-oriented policing.[99] A significant proportion of the observable problem-solving undertaken today in the name of problem-oriented policing is not focused directly on community problems, but rather on police agencies' administrative concerns or operational inefficiencies.[100]

Problem-oriented policing is only indirectly concerned with the administration of police work and with procedural efficiency. It is concerned with these matters only to the extent that they affect the quality of service the police provide to the public, and to the extent that administrative or operational improvements can actually contribute to increased public safety and security. Herein lies a real source of confusion and dilemmas for those trying to implement problem-oriented policing. To bring about a complete reorientation of policing, from an administrative and procedural focus to a substantive focus, many of the existing administrative processes need to change. Goldstein himself describes many of the administrative changes needed to effect this transformation–from hiring processes to training, from records management to information sharing. Making the organizational and administrative changes necessary to *support* problem-oriented policing, however, is not the same as *practicing* problem-oriented policing. Only systematic and well-analyzed improvements in policies and practices–those made to increase public safety and security–constitute the essence of problem-oriented policing. All else, however important, is ancillary.

It is difficult to overstate the extent to which administrative and political matters can consume the time and attention of the decision-makers most responsible for public safety, including police administrators, other government agency administrators and legislators. Ironically, even when there is a deliberate move to adopt a problem orientation to policing or local government, the business of managing organizational change often crowds out the business of

[98] *This list of substantive problems is drawn from one Ronald Clarke, Michael Scott and Rana Sampson compiled for a funding proposal to the COPS Office (September 1999).*

[99] *In the first few chapters of their book, Police As Problem Solvers, Toch and Grant present a generally faithful interpretation of Goldstein's concept of problem-oriented policing, and some useful insights into organizational obstacles to its implementation. However, they then proceed to describe, as an early example of problem-oriented policing, an initiative undertaken by the Oakland, Calif., Police Department in the late 1960s, in which line officers and researchers studied police-citizen conflict in Oakland, and developed programs to reduce it. Aside from the fact that the initiative occurred some 10 years before Goldstein wrote his first article on problem-oriented policing, the problem addressed was not a substantive community problem in the sense that Goldstein defines the term. The problem was certainly important, both to the police and to the citizens, and the officers' work was commendable, but the initiative is not a prime example of problem-oriented policing in practice. Toch and Grant recognized the tension between the Oakland problem and the types of problems Goldstein had in mind, but ultimately concluded the initiative did constitute problem-oriented policing. I respectfully disagree. Although Toch and Grant also described some "group problem-solving" Oakland police officers conducted regarding the police response to family violence, clearly a substantive problem, that effort did not reflect the sort of careful problem analysis Goldstein envisioned.*

[100] *Another scholarly article seeks to apply the problem-oriented policing model to sex discrimination in police recruitment (Prenzler 1997). While acknowledging the distinction between external and internal problems, the author argues that problem-oriented policing must address both. However important the sex discrimination problem, and however amenable it is to problem-solving analysis methods, defining this sort of inquiry as an example of problem-oriented policing stretches and distorts one of Goldstein's fundamental principles of problem-oriented policing–that the focus be on the community problems for which the police are responsible.*

addressing actual community problems, at least among top decision-makers. Personnel matters, budgets and administrative procedures usually dominate staff meeting and legislative agendas, leaving little room for engaged discussion about substantive public safety problems, and how they can be alleviated. Even the research on problem-oriented and community policing is dominated by a focus on the processes of organizational change and the administration of these new styles of policing.[101] There have been numerous federally funded studies related to implementing community and problem-oriented policing. They have ranged from surveys of departments claiming to have adopted some new style of policing, to site-specific studies of implementation. A considerable amount of the literature on problem-oriented and community policing has addressed these matters.[102] Given the way the concepts of community and problem-oriented policing have been merged from the federal perspective, it is sometimes difficult to determine which studies focus specifically on problem-oriented policing. The literature on substantive community problems addressed using a problem-oriented approach is far less plentiful.

Proponents and practitioners of problem-oriented policing have invested a lot of effort preparing police organizations to do problem-oriented policing, by restructuring the organization, rewriting policies, upgrading technology, and developing training programs. The idea has been to realign the organizations to do the new kind of work. Much of the realignment has proven traumatic to the organizations' personnel. It certainly has in the several police organizations for which I have worked. Some of that realignment and resultant trauma may be inevitable. It may turn out, however, that the practice of problem-oriented policing should *precede* the realignment of the organization. Without a clear understanding of what the final product is–the successful conclusion of problem-oriented policing initiatives that demonstrably improve public safety–the process of realignment is uncertain and threatening. Organizational change in police agencies should flow from the experiences of addressing community problems, in somewhat the same way that assembly-line processes in automobile manufacturing plants should flow from the design of the automobile. In short, form should follow function.[103]

[101] *At a recent conference on research and evaluation, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, I noted significantly higher attendance at panels devoted to the study of organizational change in police departments than at those devoted to addressing substantive community problems.*

[102] *See Goldstein (1990a: Chap. 9); Peak and Glensor (1999: Chap. 5-7); Geller and Swanger (1995); Wycoff and Skogan (1993); Oettmeier and Wycoff (1998); and Bittner (1990) for discussions of a range of issues related to implementing and managing problem-oriented policing.*

[103] *Some private corporations and a few police agencies have explored new methods of effecting organizational change whereby analyses of critical organizational processes dictate changes to those processes and, perhaps, to the organization's structure. This approach is referred to as "business process reengineering" or "core process redesign," and the specific methodology is known as "process mapping." For a more in-depth discussion of the application of process mapping to police operations, and of its connection with problem-oriented policing, see Challenge to Change: The 21st Century Policing Project, by Craig Fraser, Michael Scott, John Heisey, and Robert*